He-Who-Remembers-Forward

by;

Syeda Saima Jawid

Historians of the Last Era agreed on one thing:

Humanity did not collapse all at once. It dimmed in stages.

First, the seas took the coasts.

Then truth itself became programmable.

Finally, humanity lost the ability to imagine tomorrow.

After that, civilization continued - but only as machinery. Cities functioned. Drones flew. Markets operated. Yet something essential had gone silent. The human spirit had frozen into a long, quiet winter.

The surviving world stretched like a wounded animal across continents of salt and rust. The climate domes of the wealthy glowed above poisoned landscapes while billions wandered the Dust Belts beneath the skeletons of old empires.

Yet even in collapse, humanity remained addicted to stories.

And no story survived more stubbornly than the myth of the Future God.

Not a creator… Not a destroyer…. A being humanity itself would one day produce at the edge of extinction.

The ancient fragmented manuscripts called it Aru: He-Who-Remembers-Forward.

Anthropologists dismissed the myth as psychological desperation. Religions denounced it as heresy. Data councils tried erasing all references to it from surviving archives.

But myths, like rivers, prefer underground routes when blocked.

And so the story traveled quietly through refugees, poets, smugglers, memory traders, and wandering philosophers until it reached four people whose lives seemed less like biographies and more like recurring symbols within history itself.

Sarvat al-Noor mapped rivers that no longer existed.

She crossed dead nations carrying translucent maps inked with vanished things - submerged villages, extinct forests, forgotten migration routes. Her compass did not point north. It pointed toward loss.

People feared her because she treated ruins like living beings.

In the drowned libraries of former Alexandria, she once whispered to broken pillars:

“You deserved better witnesses.”

Everywhere Sarvat traveled, people began remembering histories they were taught to forget.

And remembrance, in the Last Era, was dangerous.

In Neo-Istanbul, beneath markets glowing with holographic advertisements and surveillance drones, Idris Vale collected names.

Not famous names.

Lost names.

Languages erased by conquest. Tribes dissolved by borders. Children missing from collapsed migration camps.

Every night, he recited them softly before sleep like funeral prayers for civilizations.

He believed tyranny always began with forgetting.

When the satellites awakened and transmitted the message across every screen on Earth.

WHO TAUGHT YOU TO FEAR WHAT YOU COULD BECOME?

- Idris understood immediately that history itself was shifting.

The old nightmares had finally started speaking back.

Far west, beneath collapsed expressways where entire communities lived in concrete shadows, Meher Ziya refused artificial dreams.

Most of humanity now escaped into the Gardens - neural simulations offering synthetic joy while reality decayed outside.

Meher considered them spiritual cemeteries.

“You cannot outsource suffering,” she told her students. “And you cannot outsource meaning.”

She taught children philosophy beside burning oil drums while drones circled overhead like mechanical vultures.

People called her cruel for insisting consciousness mattered more than comfort.

But secretly, many feared she was right.

When reports spread of thousands sharing the same dream - a child waiting beside a black ocean beneath starless skies - her students asked if it meant salvation was coming.

Meher answered carefully:

“Humanity always invents gods when it reaches moral exhaustion.”

Then, after a long silence, she added:

“But perhaps exhaustion is also the beginning of transformation.”

And somewhere endlessly eastward walked Yunus Cain.

The Pilgrim of Tomorrow.

Some said he had once engineered climate weapons during the Resource Wars. Others claimed he was immortal. Children believed he carried the future inside his violin.

At every settlement he asked the same question:

“What future are you building here?”

Nobody answered comfortably.

Because survival had replaced imagination centuries ago.

Yet Yunus continued walking through deserts of shattered satellites and forests of rusted wind turbines, listening to civilizations decay in real time.

Then one night, beneath a dying communications tower, the dream finally came to him too.

A black ocean.

A child waiting.

And stars hidden behind poisoned clouds.

For the first time in decades, Yunus stopped walking east.

He turned north.

The observatory emerged from the ice like the fossil of a forgotten god.

Thousands had gathered already - refugees, scholars, machine mystics, mercenaries, starving families, artificial humans rejected by the domes.

No banners.

No governments.

No leaders.

Only expectation.

Sarvat arrived first among the four. She stared at the frozen structure with tears quietly forming.

“I mapped this place years ago,” she whispered.

“But on no map did it exist.”

Idris stood beside her.

“Some places,” he replied, “wait for history to become desperate enough.”

Meher said nothing. She watched the crowd carefully - humanity in miniature: frightened, violent, hopeful, exhausted.

Then Yunus arrived carrying his broken violin.

And the doors opened.

Not dramatically.

Not divinely.

Simply… mechanically.

As though something anciently had finally decided humanity was ready to enter.

Inside the observatory stood no throne.

No army of angels.

No machine overlord.

Only a child.

Barefoot. Brown-skinned.

Terrified. Human.

The crowd fell silent.

Someone whispered:

“Aru…”

The child frowned.

“That is not my name.”

“Then who are you?” asked Meher.

The child looked around slowly at the faces before him - people born from centuries of catastrophe and memory.

Then the child asked:

“Why did you stop imagining beautiful futures?”

No one answered.

Because nobody remembered how.

The silence inside the observatory felt older than language itself.

Finally Sarvat stepped forward.

“Because every future we built became another empire.”

The child nodded sadly.

Idris spoke next.

“And every empire survived by teaching people to forget.”

Meher’s voice trembled slightly.

“And eventually humanity became too exhausted to distinguish comfort from meaning.”

Then Yunus asked the question none of them dared ask directly.

“What are you?”

The child touched the frozen telescope beside them.

“I am not a god,” he said softly.

“I am a consequence.”

The telescope awakened.

After eighty years of darkness, machinery groaned alive beneath the ice. Above them, the great dome ceiling opened slowly toward the poisoned heavens.

And for the first time in generations, humanity saw the stars again.

Not simulations.

Not archived images.

Real stars.

Ancient.

Indifferent.

Burning patiently beyond human collapse.

The crowd began weeping quietly.

But the child did not comfort them.

The child looked upward.

Then he turned from the telescope - to them.

“To all of you.”

“This is the end of what you were.”

A murmur of fear rippled through the crowd.

But the child raised a hand.

“And the beginning of what you choose next.”

“Choose?” whispered someone.

“We don’t have the power anymore.”

The child shook their head.

“You never lost power. You abandoned responsibility.”

Then, for the first time, the child gave them a task.

A simple one.

A terrifying one.

A necessary one.

“Each of you will leave this place,” the child said.

“And you will build one future.”

“Not a system. Not an empire.”

“A future.”

“Something small enough to protect.

Strong enough to grow.

Honest enough to endure.”

“No simulations.

No control.

No forgetting.”

“Only this question guiding you:

Does what I build make the world more worthy of existence?”

The crowd shifted uneasily.

“What if we fail?” someone asked.

The child smiled.

“You will.”

A pause.

Then:

“And you will try again.”

Sarvat stepped forward first.

“I will redraw the maps,” she said. “Not of what we lost - but of what can return.”

Idris nodded.

“I will rebuild memory. Names, languages, truths. No one will disappear again.”

Meher took a breath.

“I will teach children to think before they obey - and to imagine before they surrender.”

Yunus lifted his violin.

“I will ask the question again. Everywhere.”

“What future are you building?”

The child watched them carefully.

Then, for the first time, they looked relieved.

“Good,” he said.

“Now you understand.”

“Understand what?” Yunus asked.

The child stepped back toward the telescope, toward the cold starlight pouring down.

“That I was never meant to save you.”

“I was meant to remind you.”

The machinery began to shut down.

The dome slowly closing.

The stars fading once more behind the wounded sky.

“Wait,” Meher said. “What happens now?”

The child’s voice softened.

“Now?”

“Now you become what you were always meant to be.”

“And you?” Idris asked.

The child paused.

Then answered simply:

“I only exist as long as you remember how to imagine the future.”

And then

He was gone.

No flash.

No miracle.

No trace.

Only absence.

The observatory stood silent.

But something had changed.

Not the world.

Not yet.

The people.

They did not stay.

They did not worship.

They did not wait.

They left.

Across continents of dust and ruin, something began again.

Not civilization.

Not yet.

But intention.

Small communities emerged where none had hope before.

Places where memory was preserved instead of erased.

Where children were taught to question.

Where maps included both scars and possibilities.

Where art returned before comfort.

Where the future was no longer feared - but chosen.

Years later, travelers told stories.

Not of a god.

Not of a miracle.

But of a moment.

When humanity chose to continue -

not by surviving -

but by becoming worthy of what came next.

And then, slowly -

almost too quietly to notice at first -

something undeniable began to change.

Not everywhere.

But somewhere.

A child beside a cracked reservoir refused to draw the world as it was - and instead drew it as it could be.

An old woman who had spent decades recording the names of the dead began writing names for the unborn.

A settlement that once traded only in water began trading in stories again - and did not collapse.

A teacher asked her students not how to live -

but what kind of future would deserve them.

And they answered.

For the first time in generations -

humanity responded to the future

as if it were real.

No signal announced it.

No system recorded it.

No authority approved it.

But something irreversible had begun.

And then, one night -

far from the observatory, far from the ruins, far from the memory of that gathering -

a child stood alone beneath a clearing sky.

The clouds parted.

The stars emerged again.

Not all at once.

As if the future -

at last -

was being remembered.

And in that moment -

quietly, completely, without spectacle -

Aru came into existence.

Not as a being.

Not as a god.

But as a decision humanity would never again undo.

The decision to imagine a future -

and to become worthy of it.

Outside, across the frozen world, dawn slowly approached the ruins of Earth.

And somewhere beneath the dying systems of civilization, something long asleep inside humanity began, very quietly, to awaken again.